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DECORATION & FURNITURE

THE TIME OF HOLLY.

CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS FOR CHURCH AND HOME.

[FOR ILLUSTRATIONS SEE PLATES 397 AND 399 IN THE SUPPLEMENT.]



THE temporary decoration of a church for a festival is, in its way, quite as important as its permanent ornamentation, and it ought always to be planned and carried out under the direction of some person of taste, who understands the art of decoration. In this manner,

the whole is made harmonious and beautiful, while a piecemeal decoration only irritates by its incongruity, and pleases no one.

Evergreens must in any case furnish the groundwork. The more the foliage can be varied, the lighter and better the wreaths will appear; but in choosing materials for making wreaths those should be selected which do not fade or drop easily, or a couple of days will quickly turn the decoration into a very sorry spectacle. The first thing to be considered is the style of architecture of the church, and next the amount of light, as the decoration should never be allowed to darken the building or to throw a shade where it is not wanted. The principle of all temporary decoration is to heighten and emphasize that which is permanent, never to interfere with it. Nothing must spoil the spring of an arch, give the appearance of top-heaviness to a pillar, or injure the architectural proportions of the building. Of course there are some cases when the building is nothing more or less than a square barn, and it is difficult to spoil it, while almost any floral decoration must perforce improve it. But even then lightness can be heightened as well as beauty, and the overhanging galleries may be made to weigh more heavily than before, while the square pulpit may be made to look more uncouth with a weight of badly arranged evergreens on it.

The first great thing to bear in mind is not to allow the temporary decorations to become a nuisance by their unsuitable positions, not to decorate lamps or gas brackets in such a way as to obscure or interfere with the light, nor to torture the officiating clergyman by arranging bunches of prickly holly round his desk, or at the entrance to the choir stalls so as to catch his surplice as he passes. Neither should prickly decoration be arranged along the altar railings to the serious annoyance of unwary communicants, who are forced to kneel at a respectful distance in a position more suggestive of penance than anything else.

With the decoration of the font also this principle should be borne in mind, and no garnishing should interfere with its convenient use. The font is wont to be considered the chief feature for decoration. And it is generally put into the hands of some enthusiastic lady, who decorates it much in the same style as she would a wedding-cake, probably makes it a beautiful object in itself of ferns and rare plants; but entirely obliterates its own beautiful carving, and contrives to make it simply unapproachable should it be needed for baptism.

The decoration must, of course, depend on the font itself. If it is a very plain stone structure it may be decorated round the base with pots of growing plants,

ferns, or palms, so long as an opening is left for the officiating clergyman to approach it. If wreaths of evergreens or flowers are placed round the font they should be very delicate ones, not *cheveaux de frise* of holly or laurel. Decorations may be very properly placed on the flat cover if they are arranged so as to be removed when it is lifted off without being disturbed.

Another useful rule to be observed is, never to drive a nail or tack into wood or stone, for the decoration of a bare wall; hooks may be permanently placed under proper direction and will always serve for fastening wreaths to, but into pulpits, reading-desks, choir-stalls and such like, no nail should ever be allowed to enter under any circumstances whatever.

the arches, bay, ilex and Portuguese laurel, or in fact any evergreen which is not too large or sprawling in its growth is better.

The usual plan is to fasten the twigs with twine to a thin rope. The rope being cut of the length required, with an allowance for working up, should be suspended at a convenient height for the worker, and the twigs tied on one by one, each fresh one concealing the stalk of the last. When the wreath has been completed, the everlasting flowers or bunches of holly berries should be put on if they are desired, but it is easier to space them properly if added after the green wreath is finished than to work them in as one goes on. Many people prefer to use fine iron or copper wire to twine, and there is no doubt that it is much easier to keep the twigs of green in their places by this means.

For wreaths to fit into the moulding of an arch nothing is so good a ground-work as a thin wooden lath which if cut to the exact length required will fit into its position from the natural spring of the wood.

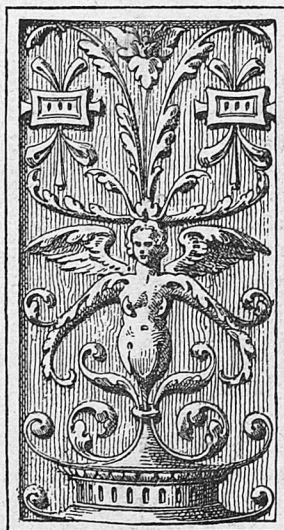
For all kinds of devices the best ground-work is perforated zinc, on which the leaves, berries or everlasting flowers may be sewn with a needle and strong thread. If this is not to be had, the best substitute is to cut the letters or devices out in cardboard, and on this the flowers or berries may be fastened with porcelain glue or with melted gelatine. A very pretty effect may be produced by covering letters or devices with fine white cotton wool, and placing them on a ground of rich crimson flock paper. These decorations are very suitable for laying on the sloping window-sills with a bordering of green.

The most general devices are of course the sacred monogram, the Roman, Greek or St. Andrew's cross, the labarum or sign of Constantine, the Star of Bethlehem, and the triangle symbol of the Trinity.

Texts illuminated or formed of berries or flowers on card or zinc are always decorative and fill vacant spaces with good effect. In arranging texts for decoration there is one point which is frequently overlooked, that is to select a lettering suitable to the church and keep to it, not mixing—as is often done in one sentence, letters from the alphabets of several different centuries or of different countries.

Hanging wreaths and mural decorations should never be made with fresh flowers which fade immediately. Little tin troughs can easily be made to order, which can be kept full of water and in which the stalks can be placed, and the troughs themselves hidden with evergreens. To avoid driving in nails decorations may be frequently made on stretchers of thin lath made to fit exactly into a panel, or may be hung in the form of banners. All these details must, however, be left to the good sense of the master decorator, as no directions can be given which apply generally. Each church must be treated individually. The selection and the placing of colors should also be considered as an important part of the decoration, and placed under the direction of the master. If this is done, the general effect will be harmonious and pleasing, and all bickering and disagreement will be avoided. HOPE MYDDLETON.

EVERGREEN belongs of right to Christmas. Our American holly can be found in almost any locality, from as far north as Massachusetts to the southern

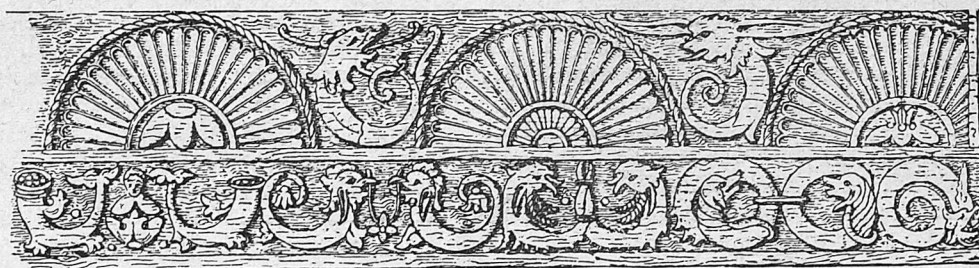


CARVED WOOD PANELS. FRENCH MODELS OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

Neither should the lines of the architecture be broken, especially vertical ones, nor should arches be inserted in impossible places.

It is sometimes very effective to put up a temporary screen of evergreens, mounted on light laths at the entrance to the chancel. This must, of course, be carpenter's work, as far as the foundation is concerned, the decoration with foliage, which should be as light and delicate as possible, only being the work of the garnishers.

Having thus pointed out the evils to be avoided in the



GERMAN RENAISSANCE WOOD-CARVING. IN AN OLD HOUSE IN HILDERSHEIM.

temporary decoration of a church for one of the great festivals, it remains to speak of the details of the ornaments to be used, leaving it to the good taste of the presiding genius to adapt them to the needs of the building under his care.

Wreaths are in all cases the staple garniture. By old custom and association holly is always used for Christmas, where it is possible to obtain it. Ivy, yew, fir, box and the fan-like twigs of *lignum-vitæ*, are, however, always effective and suitable for delicate wreaths. For larger masses for walls, or to follow

limits of Georgia, and its shining, pointed leaves and red berries make it very desirable. Mistletoe is more abundant in the southern States than in the northern, but it grows freely all along the banks of the Ohio River, and can be found in some parts of New Jersey. Cedar, laurel and arbor-vitæ are good for heavy trimmings. Pine falls to pieces too soon to be serviceable. Ground pine, box, laurel, holly and ivy leaves give good effects in lighter garlands, wreaths, wheels and crosses. Wood mosses and lichens are also useful for minor decorations and lettering.

It is an easy matter to make the evergreen into trimmings of various kinds, but the manner of working depends on the purpose for which the decoration is intended. To make sharp-pointed arches to be placed over doors, windows and mantels, the green may be bound on laths with fine thread or wire. Heavy wreaths which are to be put up in curves and festoons are made by tying green to rope in the same way as to the laths, or by sewing it on to strips of cambric. Smaller and more delicate trimmings are made on dark-colored cotton tape. Other decorations are made by gluing the green on to shapes cut from cardboard.

Unfortunately, our holly does not afford a sufficient quantity of red berries, and few of our autumn berries will last until the midwinter holiday; so, as bright berries form an important part of the decorations and contrast so well with the dark green, the lack must be supplied by manufacturing the best possible imitation of them.

Very natural-looking berries, quite near enough to nature to mislead a keen-eyed snow-bird if he should chance to find an opportunity to take a peck at them, can be made out of beeswax, wire and red paint. Warm the beeswax until it is soft enough to work with easily. Cut fine wire into pieces about six inches long. Double each piece of wire and twist it together, leaving a small loop at the middle. Around this loop mould a little piece of beeswax until it is the size and shape of a small, round berry. Twist a number of berries together to make a bunch, then hold by the

stems and dip the bunch into the paint, shake off well and hang up to dry. Shellac, dissolved in alcohol and colored by adding vermilion is better than common paint, for it gives the berries a brighter, more glossy look and dries more quickly.

Appropriate shapes can be cut out of pasteboard, painted blue, red or gold and used wherever a bit of color is needed. Gold paint can be bought at a carriage shop for a trifle, and answers the purpose quite as well as the more expensive article sold at artists' supply stores. After it is painted and dry, the edge of

them the tiny thorn-like points may be clipped off of the stems into boxes, ready for use.

A shield-shaped banner cut out of pasteboard, brushed over with mucilage and covered with the evergreen clippings, then finished with a wreath of bright berries mixed with holly around the edge makes a showy device to hang up in a corner. Triangles and trefoils can be cut from pasteboard, trimmed with green and berries and put up on the walls in a variety of combinations.

The wheel must have a place in the decorations, for

Yule was a festival of the ancients to celebrate the return of the "fiery sun-wheel." A wheel can easily be made if one of the size desired is not at hand. It must be entirely covered with green, holly predominating, and hung from the ceiling. A lovely effect is gained by sprinkling starch over some of the evergreen to imitate frost, but it must be used only in one or two places or the effect is spoiled.

The manner of disposing of the decorations when made depends so much on the shape and style of the rooms, that those who undertake to decorate their homes with "Christmas green" must decide for themselves just how to dispose of the trimmings to the best advantage.

Shields of green and of color edged with wreaths of green and bright berries look well placed in the corners of the hall facing the entrance door to make supports for light, graceful branches of evergreen. If

there is a win-

dow on the stair landing situated so that it faces the hall below it can be made the foundation of very effective decoration. Edge the window-frame with heavy wreaths of dark green box. Put a wheel with a diameter as great as the width of the window, in the centre and oval wreaths in the corners above and below. In the spaces left at the sides put small wreaths and feathery groups of green. After all is finished dust starch and powdered mica over the green.

A large bunch of mistletoe must be hung up in the parlor so that under its charmed green, cunning



THE HALLWAY IN THE HOUSE OF EDMOND DE GONCOURT. DRAWN BY CAMILLE PITON.

SHOWING THE POSSIBILITIES OF TASTEFUL DECORATION IN A SMALL AND MODEST HOME.

the design is to be trimmed around with green, and a Christmas motto such as "Christmas Greeting," or "Merry Christmas to All," put in the centre. The letters are drawn on the background; very thick mucilage is spread on the shape of the letter; fine bits of green which have been clipped off of the stems are next sprinkled on thickly and pressed down lightly; enough will adhere to give the letters a raised appearance. Large letters for more extensive mottoes are made in the same manner. The refuse sprays of evergreen may be given over to the small hands which are always so ready to help on such occasions, and by

youths may have an opportunity to kiss unsuspecting maidens. To be in keeping with old custom, the mistletoe must be fastened to a wheel suspended from the ceiling. The wheel looks well hung by garlands of holly leaves sewed to dark colored tape, or if there is a chandelier in the room it may be hung from and directly beneath it. Garlands and festoons of green are arranged around the walls of the room in any way which the taste of the worker suggests, but sameness should be avoided as far as possible. The wheel and mistletoe should be used only in the one place, and the wheel should not appear in any place except the parlor and the hall window.

All kinds of green should be used in abundance, but nothing should be employed for color save natural berries, homemade berries, and the shields and banners, except that a few bunches of bright ribbon are also allowable. Artificial flowers should not be used, and even fresh blossoms from the green-house are relegated to the flower bowls on the tables.

L. A. FRANCE.

PAINTING ON LINCRUSTA.

THAT valuable product of modern ingenuity known as lincrusta—or Lincrusta-Walton, as it is generally called in England, in honor of its inventor—has become a wonderfully popular material for decoration by amateurs. That it is cheap and indestructible, and painting on it in its simpler methods produces attractive results without calling for special art training, doubtless has much to do with the matter. While, as our readers know, we deprecate the practice of imitating one material in another, it is impossible to regard without astonishment the cleverness of some of the copies in lincrusta of ceramic and metallic art objects to be seen in places where artists' materials are sold. The effect of majolica is produced as follows: For a first coat: "Use tube colors, ground in japan, equal parts of flake and zinc whites, thoroughly mixed with Damar varnish. Apply to the surface of the lincrusta two coats of this preparation. When perfectly dry, proceed with the colors desired." For the second coat: "Use tube colors, ground in japan, mixed thoroughly with Damar varnish only. The varnish should be used thin enough to allow the color to flow freely into deep places. To finish the decoration, when perfectly dry apply two heavy coats of Damar or white spirit varnish. Damar varnish, if too heavy to flow freely, should be thinned with turpentine, but alcohol should be used in thinning the white spirit varnish. Lincrusta being a non-absorbent material, but little preparation is necessary before gilding, but a coating of brown dryer or shellac varnish economizes the bronzing powder and enhances its effect. When a burnished surface is desired, the surface is prepared by the application of three or four coats of the ordinary burnish size."

Madame Le Prince gives the following suggestions for producing metallic effects on lincrusta: For oxidized silver: "Cover in silver leaf, or, if preferred, in one or both silver bronzes. Glaze the silvered surface with white shellac varnish; when dry, rub a brush well charged with dark blue gray oil color into all interstices of the ornament in relief, as well as upon the background, leaving the color thickest upon those portions of background more immediately surrounding the raised ornament; now remove the color from highest points by rubbing with a soft cloth tightly folded, and pass a clean brush over those parts in lower relief that require to be left in half tone. Duller yet more artistic effects are produced by using 'dry color' in powder for the deepest shades. It is of importance that these colors lie thickest on those parts of the design thrown most into shade, and, as in natural oxidation, the flat surface forming background should have fewer and more subdued lights than the more prominent parts of raised ornament. A careful study of some piece of silver oxidized by nature will help the student more than many words, and every little grace of burnished light and softened shadow noted on the true chasing and transferred to work in hand will give to it further beauty. For a fairly permanent bright green bronze, paint over a first coating of brown dryer a second of copper bronze in powder, mixed with bronzing liquid; dry thoroughly. Over this draw a brush laden with green bronze powder, also mixed with bronzing liquid; clear all high lights

by rubbing with a soft cloth, allowing tiny patches of the copper to show through on background also. Dry well, and heighten the effect by drawing a brush containing pale gold bronze, damped with bronzing liquid, and held horizontally, rapidly backward and forward, catching lightly the prominences. When dry, coat once or twice in white glazing varnish. This again may be toned, where more subdued effect is desired, by a thin wash of terre verte (oil color), thinned with boiled linseed oil, and more rubbing with a soft cloth, to bring out or keep under the various portions of relief. For Florentine bronzes copper and varied shades of gold bronzing powders are used, with Vandyck for shades. For 'antique' bronzes, use the same list of material as for 'bright green bronze,' laying first a ground of green oil paint to obtain depth in shade. When lights have been 'picked out' in colored bronzes, rub a little beeswax, softened by turpentine to a thin paste, and mixed with a very little of the brown dryer, into the deepest shadows of your panel, and a few moments later pass over them a brush laden with Paris green in fine dry powder."

The page of designs opposite gives a fair idea of the artistic excellence of the objects Messrs. Fr. Beck & Co. are making in lincrusta for decoration by amateurs.

Notes on Decoration.

THE chief weakness of American architectural decoration is that it almost invariably fails to achieve the first purpose of all decoration—appropriateness. We note this fact on every hand—in our churches, like St. Paul's with its abominable coloring, and Trinity with its reredos so puny in detail that its design can scarcely be seen from the altar rail; in our theatres, which, from the Metropolitan Opera House down, present no instance of congruous interior embellishment; in our hotels and private houses. All decoration to be just must be in proportion as well as in keeping with the structure it decorates. In a church of the size of Trinity, for instance, the details should be calculated upon the same scale throughout. Such an addition as the reredos is lost, because its proportions are dwarfed by its surroundings. The Asa Packer reredos in St. Mark's church, at Mauch Chunk, which is placed in an edifice only a third as large as Trinity, is calculated on a larger scale than the Astor reredos, and has a far finer effect, because it is in proportion to the place of which it is a part. The rule applies to flat decoration as well. In vast and lofty spaces broad and simple masses are required. Puny detail, no matter how beautiful in itself, is not only lost in such application, but aids by its diminutiveness in confusing and belittling the general effect. Disconnected and inappropriate detail produces the same result. To put it in the briefest terms: The properly decorated, like the properly built, house has all of its decoration considered in relation to its uses. No one dreams of decorating his dining-room like a church or his library like a ball room. But in the minor details far greater barbarisms are perpetrated, for styles of architecture are fused and confused into grotesque nondescripts, and shreds and patches of decoration from entirely opposite sources are combined to form one preposterous whole. In some cases a sort of superficial harmony is produced by the relation of colors, but the effect is only superficial. The moment investigation begins, the errors become grievously manifest to any observer with a sensitive appreciation of the right and wrong in decoration.

* * *

WHEN a decorative or architectural work of magnitude is contemplated in any other country but ours, the designs are carefully fitted to the purpose of the work from the start. Appropriateness is the first consideration. The execution of the work proceeds in all of its details with this one point in view. A jail is not built on the same plan as a palace or a private mansion on that of a public building. Nor is the work permitted to rest at the discretion of a dozen different architects, decorators and contractors. The supervising or consulting architect is the directing power of the machinery of creation. It is his judgment which reduces the fragments of the work to a homogeneous whole. His taste prevents the contradic-

tions which occur when many men work in patches upon the same task. He permits no sacrifice of appropriateness to mere prettiness any more than to the gratification of a personal whim. In this country, on the contrary, the painters and carvers, the metal and glass workers, the upholsterers and furniture builders and so on, all work at their own sweet wills, without relation to one another, often in senseless rivalry. Each may do his best, but he contributes only to a general confusion, so that the result instead of being perfect in the aggregate is invariably the reverse.

* * *

WHEN we speak of the sums of money spent on the decoration of such interiors as that of the Hoffman House, we should rather speak of them as being wasted. Indeed, they are worse than wasted, for they are not only not represented by the results, but such results as there are tend to pervert the taste and perpetuate in other spots the errors which invest this one with sumptuous absurdity. Such decoration as that at the Hoffman House is not even barbarically magnificent, for barbarous decoration has a pervading symmetry, however unusual or exaggerated its composite effect may be. Here, in a house devoted to the purpose of rest and refreshment, the very portal is embellished with trophies of war. In the café the beautiful and the hideous, the extravagantly expensive and the vulgarly cheap, jostle one another on every hand. The newly completed portion of the building is the same so that the whole hotel is a sort of architectural and decorative Madame Tussaud's, crowded with a variety which the thoughtless or ignorant find curious and interesting but which is indescribably vulgar to all who are capable of forming an accurate judgment. Yet there are in England dozens of hotels and public restaurants and resorts like this which, at a far less expenditure, have been made monuments of appropriateness and good taste. I can cite the Grosvenor Hotel, in Chester, for one—perhaps the Criterion restaurant in London for another. The enormous advertising the Hoffman House has received has made its splendors familiar by report throughout the country. It is a place of call for strangers who have read of it, and these visitors being, as a rule, of the sort which does not discriminate, they carry away with them impressions which are absolutely false. The pernicious results of a bad example are well known. Such an example as this is probably responsible for more outrages on true decoration in this country than any other that we are afflicted with.

* * *

THE only large theatre we have ever had in this country which came any way near true symmetry of decoration and architecture was Booth's. It was a noble house. It looked like a theatre, without and within. It had the entrances which belong to a great playhouse, and the massive and not extravagantly ornate architecture which its use called for. The original decorations of the interior were by an Italian painter and except for an over-conscientious abundance of small detail which was wasted on the ceiling, they were admirably conceived and executed. The decoration of the Madison Square Theatre is, in a general sense, well carried out as far as its interior is concerned. But the artistic harmony of its decoration is destroyed by the contradiction of the details. That theatre could be given a superb grace and lightness by simply gilding the walls from a dado of velvet. The gold should be applied in one uniform flat, and variety could be given by toning it with bitumen from the base up, so that the mass of light would be concentrated overhead. The expense of this decoration would be an unimportant item, for the gold once applied would, if the best leaf were used, last as long as the wall itself. Any breaks in the wall could be patched. The only renewals necessary would be in the dado when wear and tear demanded it.

* * *

IN view of the fact that Trinity and Grace churches are to be re-decorated internally, it will be interesting to see how far they will verify these observations. The re-decoration is in both cases, I believe, in the hands of a committee of the church, by whom all contracts will be awarded. As far as I know not a member of either committee is an architect or even a man of any known judgment in architectural and artistic matters. Yet the picturesque fate of the churches is given over to them as absolutely as if it were a mere case of painting a fence. ARCHITECT.